

KMP at the World Book Fair Day 10 – Friday 1 June 2007

It was a day of **people** on our penultimate day at the book fair, proving as a strong and very apt reminder that the main point of us being here is not just about making sales but about Dharma, talking to people and even “testing” our own minds.

Things started off in a cheery way, when the blessings of several monks and nuns popped by the booth to browse and look around – a wonderful blessing from the Sangha indeed, to round off our week here.



JJ spent the morning getting lots of Sangha blessings...



It also seemed to be a day to reunite with old friends. Sharon met up with an old university friend she hadn't seen in 20 years who stayed to talk for a while. She ended up buying the Gaden DVD and is interested to learn more; she'll be coming up to KL in the near future.



Susan talks to Josh the artist

JJ also introduced his friend, Josh, a graphic designer and artist, to KMP. He has done some beautiful drawings, of which he showed us several photos. Susan asked him if he would like to try his hand at drawing Setrap and JJ is following up with this by constantly reminding him!

After the peaceful calm of the Sangha and friendly old faces, things started to

heat up a bit. Firstly, a man walking past the KMP booth with his family said loud enough for all to hear, “Those are devil worshippers” before hurrying away quickly. Interesting that he said this right in front of the *Compassion Conquers All* poster – has compassion become the new controversy, we wonder?...

KMP's booth is located within a specific section allocated to religious publishers and organisations and this seemed to be a particular bugbear with a passing visitor who commented loudly that “All these people are trying to be

god!" As he entered KMP's booth he said again, "You see, these people are also trying to be god." He went on to state that actually *money* is god, saying, "My children love me because I have money, my wife loves me because I have money." He then turned to Susan and said, "I bet you love your father because he has money, right?" Even Susan was dumbfounded by this comment! He walked round the booth but quickly left before anyone had the chance to really talk to him or find out more about his money philosophy.

Later in the evening, a man passed by and stopped to watch the *While I Still Can* DVD that we were playing at the booth. After watching the video for about 20 minutes, he proceeded to talk to Joe and Jamie, and eventually ended up in a long discussion and debate with Jamie for almost 1 ½ hours. He posed many interesting questions about what it means to be kind, how to really be practise kindness, why we need to be extend kindness to others (as opposed to being kind to just ourselves) in order to be thought of as "kind."

He also brought up the impossibility of using logic to discuss religion and spirituality and highlighted that he had found many things within the Buddhist teachings that he couldn't accept or which didn't seem logical to him at all. He felt that Buddha never really gave us an objective and logical answer to where we originally came from, and thought that his statement that we should keep seeking actually meant that Buddha's knowledge was limited; that he was encouraging us to find out more of what he hadn't been able to. He said to Jamie that if he was really going to use logic to debate with her, he would definitely beat her – sounds like a hefty challenge!

As an example, he said that although he does agree with Buddha's teachings on practising kindness, he felt that following the law of "not killing" is not very logical. He observed that if every human and animal only ate grass and vegetables, the ecological system of the planet would go out of balance and we would all be extinct by now. In other words, humans and animals killing each other is necessary in order for us to stay alive. Hmmm, interesting...

In brief, his discussion seemed very focused on obtaining a definite answer and solid proof to how we were initially created (the beginning) and how we can know when we are Enlightened (the end result). Though Jamie tried to steer the conversation back to what it means to practice *here* and at our level *now*, he seemed more interested in finding the ultimate answer about the "beginning" and the "end." Paradoxically, though he was open in discussing issues, it seemed that he was still quite fixed in his perception of *how* the answers should be. He overtly stated that no path has been able to answer his questions yet and that he didn't think Rinpoche could either.

However, though it may seem like he was being quite argumentative, he was not actually aggressive in his discussion. Actually, he was more interested in discussion and sharing what he refers to as "world views" and revealed a kind of ardent curiosity to really find the truth. At the end of the conversation, he was keen to add that he was not trying to dissuade Jamie from her faith and he hoped that by this questioning and debate, it would actually help her to strengthen her faith. He has requested to keep in touch and has exchanged

contacts with us, showing great interest in sharing more discussion in the future.

Petrus, the guy who had dropped by the booth yesterday looking for the Setrap book, came by again today and had the chance to meet and talk to Chia and Jamie as well. He is full of boundless energy and was very keen to share his experiences and work with his Guru. We have invited him to come to visit us in KL, and he said that he is very keen to meet Rinpoche, after having visited his website.

After the day's work, when we'd wrapped up and counted the bills (totalling a solid S\$626), we then adjourned over to Rosalind's (Kelvin Hong's sister) apartment where she kindly hosted a little get-together for all of KMP's staff to chill out and celebrate the week's many successes. Four KMP members have been staying at her place and she has been incredibly kind in opening her home to them and the rest of the team.

After their morning shift was over, Sharon and Susan beat the crazy weekend shopper crowds to buy and prepare food for a little party. The others joined them back in the flat towards the end of the evening, after the book fair.



There, KMP presented a wealth vase and other gifts as a token of appreciation to Mr. Teo Lai Seng, without whom our participation in this book fair wouldn't have been possible. From helping us shift and store books, to obtaining licenses for our DVDs, to chauffeuring us around, to stopping by every evening after work to help out at the booth and chat to customers, to bringing home-cooked food to warm our tummies, he has been absolutely instrumental in making it all happen – and always with such a happy, warm smile! We fold our hands to your Mr Teo – you are FAB!!!!



On behalf of KMP, Joe also presented a little present of a Tsongkhapa tsatsa to Rosalind to thank her for helping us out. Another of Sharon's friends, PG Gien, who has so kindly offered to help us transport books and things back to KL when she next drives up, also received a Tsongkhapa tsatsa from KMP as a thank you for her kind offer.



The party was an excellent chance for us to all meet up again after 8 days of being at the book fair, to recap some of challenges that we'd faced. Inspired by the long debate that Jamie had had with her last visitor to the booth, we had a long and very fruitful discussion of our different experiences in dealing with the types of tough questions that we get, and the people we come across.

We have realised within just these few days that making sales is actually the easiest part of it all. The hardest part is being able to put what we know into practice, to really understand what we have been taught to be able to discuss it with people from all backgrounds and levels.

It can be exhilarating and fun when we see that some of what we share brings a bit of joy and peace to someone's mind, if only for the day; but it can also be incredibly frustrating and also discouraging to ourselves when we find ourselves with our backs against the wall, unable to fully answer someone's question or to help them find that elusive truth they're searching for. In a way, it is an excellent push for us to look at what we've learnt and what else we need to learn. The experiences also help us understand other people better, and gives a perfect opportunity for seeing how our mind reacts to people's challenges or even attacks on our practices.

As Susan, Sharon, Shin and Yek Yee are all staying together, they explained to the rest of us that they would always spend every evening discussing the day's events, challenges and encounters. It has been a great way for them to learn from each other and to talk about the kind of questions they get asked and how they might answer.

There's only one day left... time sure flies when you're being little Dharma dakinis!

